

ELDER ABUSE

Aging Summit

April 28, 2014

Broken Trust — Dot

Maine Public Broadcasting Network

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Dot's Case

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- ❑ The social worker: Met Dot through a local mental health agency
- ❑ Home health care, PT, social worker from nursing agency: For in-home rehab
- ❑ LE: Dot's daughter dared her to contact the police
- ❑ Bank: Dot's daughter's friend worked at the bank
- ❑ APS: No referral to APS

Dot's Outcome

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- ❑ SW: Worked with Dot, Provided support
- ❑ Others: Were told of abuses, but did not report it or assist Dot
- ❑ LE: Interviewed Dot in her daughter's presence and then told her how lucky she was to have a daughter who kept her at home rather than in a nursing home; No charges or investigation; no prosecution
- ❑ Bank: Helped the daughter get her name on Dot's accounts

Result: Dot lost everything, including her home.

Elder Abuse: Under the Radar

For every one case of elder abuse that comes to the attention of a responsible entity...

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another twenty three cases never come to light.

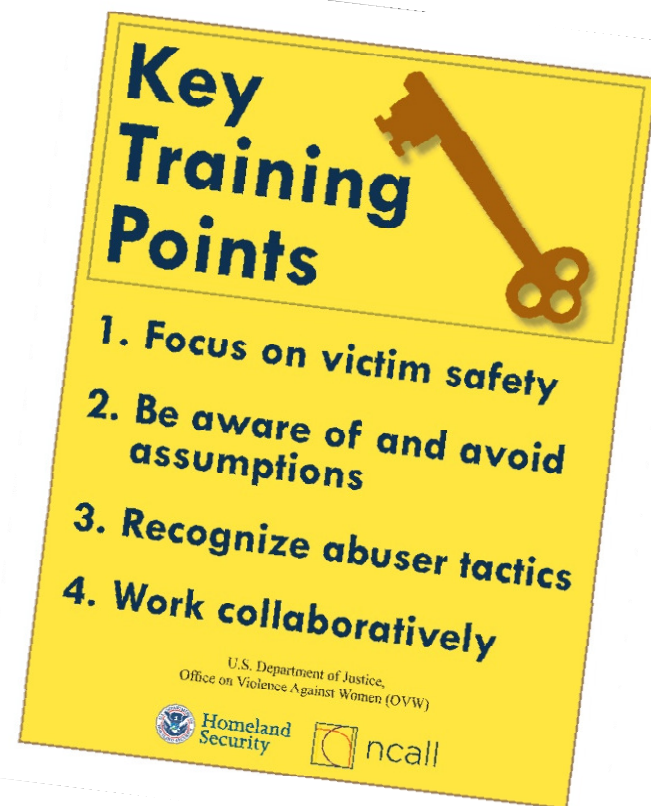
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Source: NYS Elder Abuse Prevalence Study; Weill Cornell Medical College, NYC Department for the Aging; Lifespan; (2011)
Slide courtesy of Life Long Justice

Key Training Points

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- Focus on victim safety
- Be aware of and avoid assumptions
- Recognize abuser tactics
- Work collaboratively



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Commitment

Without commitment any
excuse is as good as an other.

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Take Action Against Elder Abuse

You will save a life.

Program Examples

- MEDART
- Maine Elder Justice Partners (DOJ)
- Martha's Cottage
- Triads
- MCJA
- Sexual Assault Services “Teas”

What is Elder Abuse?

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When an older adult experiences:

- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Financial exploitation

(Any of the above may co-occur with each other)

Recognizing Elder Abuse

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Consider physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. What would be some of the ***indicators*** of these forms of abuse?

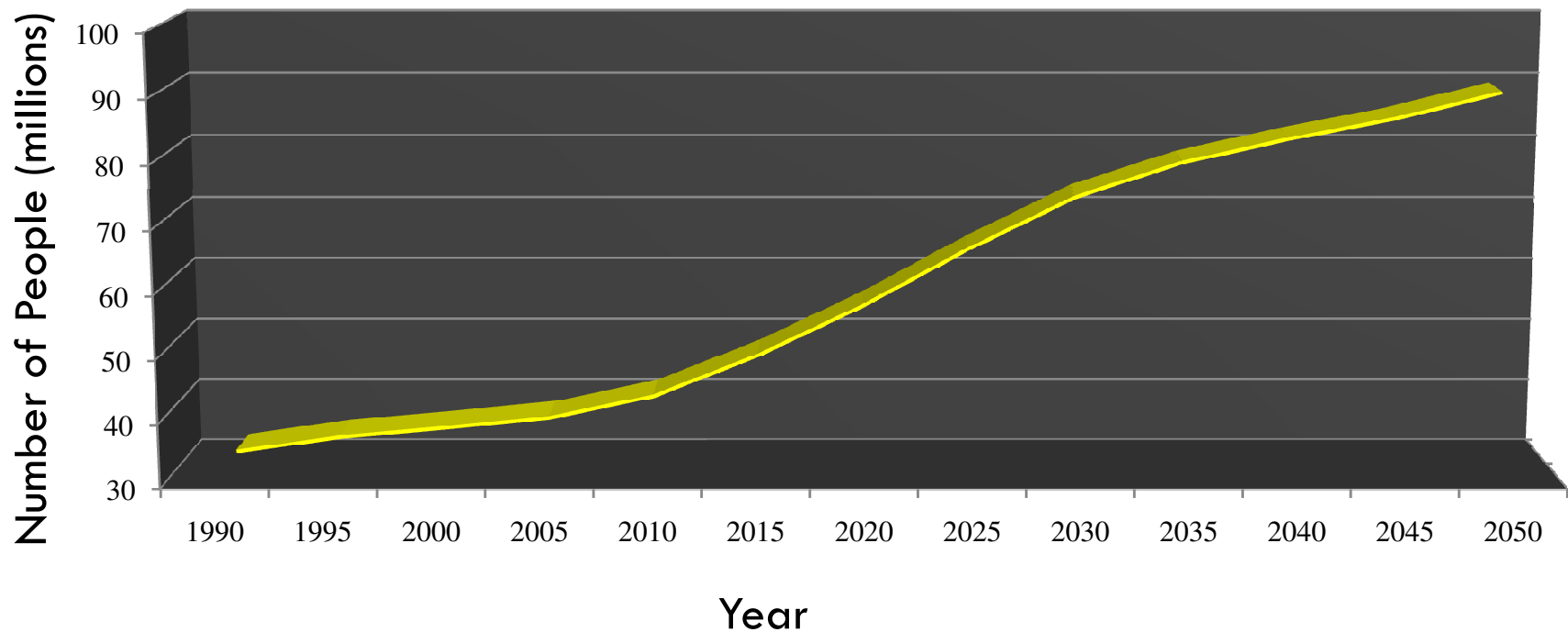
- ❑ Victim indicators
- ❑ Suspect indicators
- ❑ Environmental indicators

Who Are Victims of Elder Abuse?

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- Age: Over 60
- Gender: Majority of victims are female; but also older males
- All racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds

U.S. Population Age 65 and Older is on the Rise 1990-2050



Source: U.S. Census Bureau population estimates.

Slide courtesy of Life Long Justice.



Who Commits Elder Abuse?

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- ☐ Intimate partners
- ☐ Adult children and other family members
- ☐ Caregivers
- ☐ Others in positions of authority

This definition excludes victimization by strangers.

Where Does Elder Abuse Occur?

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- ☐ Private residences
- ☐ Public settings
- ☐ Facility settings

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Dynamics of Elder Abuse

Why Does Elder Abuse Occur and Persist?

How Are Older People Harmed?

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- Accidents
- Well-intended caregivers
- By persons with physical/mental health conditions who can't control aggressive behavior
- Elder abuse (intent)

Why Does Elder Abuse Occur and Persist?

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- Greed
- Power and control

Abuser Behaviors

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Abusers often:

- ☐ Lie
- ☐ Manipulate
- ☐ Charm
- ☐ Justify their behavior
- ☐ Blame the victim and others

Common Abuser Justifications

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Blames the Victim

- ❑ “She’s clumsy” (accident)
- ❑ “She didn’t do what I wanted” (victim’s behavior)
- ❑ “She started it” (mutual abuse)
- ❑ “He hit me when I was a child” (learned behavior)

Common Abuser Justifications

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Abuser Excuses

- ❑ “I have a problem with my temper” (anger)
- ❑ “I was drunk or high” (substance abuse problem)
- ❑ “I’m sick. It’s not my fault.” (physical or mental health issue)
- ❑ “In my culture, elders share their resources” (culture)
- ❑ “He is too difficult to care for” (caregiver stress)

Caregiver Stress

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- Emotions and feelings that some caregivers experience while assisting a person with medical needs or disabilities.

Reframing Caregiver Stress and Abuse

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- Everyone experiences stress but most do not abuse
- Abuse is a pattern of tactics rather than an isolated incident
- Stressed caregivers target only the older adult—not others
- Abusers use caregiver stress as an excuse to create sympathy for themselves

Outcomes If Abusers' Justifications are Believed Without Further Investigation

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- ❑ Offenders are not held accountable
- ❑ Message to abusers—do whatever you want with no consequences
- ❑ Providing abusers with services to address stress, anger, or substance abuse does not deal with power and control or greed
- ❑ Victims may not reach out for help again
- ❑ Victim safety is not addressed

Indicators of Exploitation

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- ❑ Elder doesn't know what happens to their money
- ❑ Checks no longer come to the house
- ❑ Unexplained disappearance of funds or valuables
- ❑ Elder reports signing papers and doesn't know what was signed
- ❑ Transfer of property, savings

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Anonymous Tip Line:

(770) 794-6990



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Thank You

Ricker Hamilton

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Maine DHHS